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MAINE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION.

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SECOND SERIES.

CAULIFLOWERS.

The cauliflower is a vegetable highly prized by many, but is too seldom met with in the home gardens of our state. Possessing many of the good qualities of the cabbage, it is to a certain extent lacking in the peculiar rank flavor which renders the former disagreeable to many people. The delicate qualities of the cauliflower are, however, frequently disguised or lost through failure of the housewife to familiarize herself with the best methods of serving. For this reason we send with this bulletin directions for cooking the cauliflower, condensed from material kindly furnished by Miss Anna Barrows, School of Domestic Science, Boston.*

1. *Culture*: In a general way the culture is the same as for cabbages. Early varieties should be started in the house or hot bed as soon as the first of April. Handle as needed and set in the open field as early as possible—say the 20th of May, setting the plants about two by three feet.

The best soil is a rich, moist, but well drained loam. Like the

* *Directions for Cooking the Cauliflower*.—A cabbage or cauliflower, unless taken directly from the garden, is much improved if so placed that it can absorb water through its stalk for 12 to 24 hours before cooking. Soak a cauliflower, head down, in cold salted water for an hour before cooking, to draw out any insects that may be concealed. A small cauliflower may be cooked whole and should be placed in the kettle with the flowerets up, as the stalk needs most thorough cooking. A large head should be divided into six or eight sections. Cook in a kettle of rapidly boiling salted water to which may be added one-fourth of a level teaspoonful of soda, (the soda aids in softening the woody fibre). The kettle should be skimmed occasionally while the vegetable is cooking; or, to save trouble, some prefer tying the cauliflower in a thin cloth. An agate or porcelain lined kettle is preferable to iron, which is likely to discolor the cauliflower. The odor is less noticeable if the kettle is left uncovered; the water may also be changed to dispel the odor. A cauliflower should be tender after twenty to thirty minutes of rapid boiling. If overcooked it appears soggy and water-logged.

A good cauliflower, well cooked, requires little additional flavor beside salt and good butter. Some, however, prefer the addition of grated cheese. The cauliflower may also be served as a garnish for meats, in sauces, soups and is excellent cold as a salad. Many prefer it with a thick cream sauce.

"Cold boiled cauliflower is very good fried plain in butter or breaded and fried, or mashed and fried like oyster plant, with the addition of an egg and a palatable seasoning of salt and pepper."

The last paragraph is from Miss Corson's Practical American Cookery. Many other hints may be obtained from this and other leading guides to cookery.

cabbage, the cauliflower is a gross feeder and demands intense culture. If growth is stopped, from any cause, the heads are liable to "button," or form small sections interspersed with leaves, worthless for market purposes.

Frequent cultivation is necessary and it is probable that in case of very dry weather about the time of heading, irrigation would be a profitable means of securing a crop, at least for home use. When the heads are about three inches across, the outer leaves should be brought together and held in place by means of a piece of twine or raffia, that the heads may be well bleached.

2. *Influence of Early Treatment of Plants:* The question as to the value of handling the plants in pots previous to setting in the open field, was considered with reference to the number of heads produced. Four varieties were used in the test with the following results:

In two instances there was a difference of twenty per cent. in favor of the plants grown in pots. One variety gave the same number of heads in each case, but the plants from pots were two or three weeks earlier than the others. The fourth variety gave a slight difference—about seven per cent.—in favor of the box treatment. Doubtless any benefit that might arise from handling plants in pots would lie in the more uniform rate of growth secured.

Conclusion: Indications point to an increased percentage of marketable heads as a result of handling cauliflower plants in pots during the early stages of growth.

3. *Effects of Trimming:* The practice of reducing the amount of foliage at the time of removal to the field received attention the past season. The foliage of one lot of each of five varieties was reduced by one-half, while duplicate lots were left without trimming.

As a rule, the per cent. of heads formed was greater from plants not trimmed. There was practically no difference in the earliness of the two lots, nor was there a marked difference in the size of the heads.

Conclusion: Results obtained will not warrant us in commending the practice of trimming cauliflower plants severely at time of setting in the field.

4. *Varieties:* Nearly all of the more important varieties of cauliflower were grown in our gardens the past season for purposes

of comparison. As was expected, great variation was found in the different varieties and strains of the same type, as regards earliness, percentage of heads formed, and the character and quality of the heads.

Nearly all of the earliest varieties produced a high percentage of marketable heads, while the late sorts were anything but satisfactory. Of the whole number of varieties grown, sixteen produced more than seventy-five per cent. of marketable heads, while with eight varieties every plant produced a good head. Most of the late varieties were checked by the dry weather and showed a tendency to "button," or go to seed.

The following field notes concerning some of the more important varieties were made :

Alabaster (Johnson & Stokes).—Said to be a sport from *Dwarf Erfurt* (see below). A small, early variety, of erect habit, thus permitting of very close planting.

Autumn Giant (Thorburn).—A very large, late variety of excellent quality. Should not be started so early as most other sorts.

Best Early (*Burpee's Best Early*, Burpee).—Small, but one of the earliest and surest heading varieties.

Dwarf Erfurt. (Thorburn).—Takes its name from the city of Erfurt, Germany, where cauliflowers are extensively grown. One of the most popular early varieties. Several strains were grown the past season, of which the best seemed to be Thorburn's Extra Early.

Early Danish (Farquhar).—Of the Erfurt type; forming a medium sized head, very firm and good. One of the best.

Early Paris (Thorburn, Farquhar).—Moderately vigorous, with long stem and of spreading habit. Leaves covered with heavy bluish white bloom, giving the variety a characteristic light shade. Heads of fair size, but lacking in solidity.

Giant Purple (Childs).—A large late variety; very attractive when growing and of excellent flavor, but when served its color is objectionable.

Imperial (Landreth).—A medium sized, pure white variety; of spreading habit, heads not sufficiently firm.

Kronk's Perfection (Farquhar).—A very fine strain of the Erfurt type. Of medium size, early, uniform, and in our plantation was among the best.

Landreth First (Landreth).—Of vigorous, erect habit, but having a short stem. Heads of medium size, white, and rather remarkable for uniformity. One of the best.

Livingston's Earliest (Livingston).—One of the earliest. Small but uniform in date of maturity—a valuable consideration in a market variety.

Long Island Beauty (Gregory).—A valuable second early sort. Only two cuttings were necessary, and every plant produced a marketable head.

Prize Earliest (Maule).—Three weeks later than some of the other early sorts. Not satisfactory this season.

Snowball (*Early Snowball*, Thorburn).—A moderately vigorous variety forming small but very solid heads. From this type many valuable strains have been derived. One of the most valuable of these is the next mentioned.

Thorburn Gilt Edge (Thorburn).—Not quite so vigorous as the parent, the leaves being slightly smaller and very dense, while the stem is shorter. Heads small but of good form and solid. Usually one of the most reliable.

Vaughan's Danish Snowball (Vaughan).—Differs little from *Snowball* mentioned above. Very early and apparently a sure header.

Algiers, Italian Taranto, Late Dutch, London, Nonpareil, Stadtholder and some others, while producing very good individual heads, were not reliable the past season, but will be given further trial.

SUMMARY.

1. The general treatment of the cauliflower is similar to that required by cabbages. Thorough and frequent cultivation are essential. The outer leaves should be brought together and tied a few days before cutting, that the heads may be well bleached.

2. Handling plants in pots before setting in the field increased the percentage of marketable heads.

3. Trimming plants at time of setting is of doubtful value.

4. Early varieties are, as a rule, more certain to produce a satisfactory crop than are the later sorts.

5. The earliest varieties grown the past season were: Burpee's Best Early, Dwarf Danish, Kronk's Perfection and Livingston's Earliest; closely followed by Alabaster, Landreth's First, Long Island Beauty and several strains of Snowball. All of these varieties produced a high percentage of marketable heads.

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